

Town of Easton Façade Improvement Program

Small Grants Funding

FY 2015/16

The Town of Easton has established a Façade Improvement Program that offers small project financial assistance to property owners or tenants seeking to renovate or restore building facades within our designated target area. The Town of Easton's target area is defined as the commercial corridors within Easton's Historic District along Dover, Goldsborough, Washington, and Harrison Streets. The Town may attempt to limit this program to specific blocks in order to concentrate its limited funds.

The Program seeks to revitalize Downtown Easton by improving its physical appearance. The program makes available matching financing at a 1:1 ratio for exterior rehabilitation of commercial and mixed-use structures. For every dollar of business/owner funds, the Town of Easton may provide up to one dollar for such improvements. Funding of this program is generally contingent upon the Town of Easton receiving financial assistance from the State of Maryland. For FY 2015/16, a Community Legacy Grant from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development in the amount of \$25,000 is funding this program. There is a \$5,000 grant cap per project (making the total project cost at least \$10,000 total). The Town of Easton may increase either the ratio of assistance or the per project cap, when warranted on a case-by-case basis (e.g. lack of overall applications, a project of extraordinary significance in terms of its expected impact or urgency to complete).

The Town of Easton will assist in funding well-designed improvements consistent with Easton's Historic District Design Guidelines. It is implicit that projects that meet HDC approval will meet this standard. The Town of Easton shall determine if it wishes to participate in the renovation of a specific property on a case-by-case basis.

The term façade is generally the front of a building or any of its sides facing a public right of way. For this program, building walls that are visible from a public street shall also be eligible for funding. Generally, for buildings with little or no setbacks from adjacent buildings, only the front wall will be considered. Corner buildings can request funding for more than one side of the structure. The greatest emphasis shall be placed on the first floor façade, as it is the most visual part of the building to pedestrians.

Upgrading the image of a downtown district requires the evaluation of each proposed improvement. It is important that all of the elements of the façade be coordinated in an approach that respects the building's location and neighboring structures, and makes a noticeable visual improvement. Where feasible, the Town of Easton will encourage multiple projects within a given block or area, so that the positive impact is maximized. A project must be completed within 6 months of application approval by the Town of Easton. The Town will consider all of these factors in determining approval, modification or rejection of each application.

No funds will be awarded to any property which is delinquent in the payment of Town taxes or subject to any current Code violations (unless the proposed project will correct a Code Violation).

Requests for funds are due in the Town Office by close of business on October 1, 2015. Applicants should provide pictures, renderings, plans or elevations to depict the proposed project, as well as a budget indicating the total project cost and the amount of grant funding requested.

For more information about this program, please contact the Town Planner, Lynn B. Thomas, Jr., AICP at (410) 822-1943; 14 South Harrison Street, Easton, MD 21601; or via e-mail at lbthomas@town-eastonmd.com.